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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP; DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC; POSTS TO FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS

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SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - TURKEY

REF: A) STATE 205073, B) ANKARA 673, C) ISTANBUL 158

1A. COUNTRY CONDITIONS

11. Until recently Turkey could be considered a low-fraud country from a consular perspective. In the past year, however, Mission Turkey has seen an increase in the number of fraudulent documents presented during interviews, and also uncovered several alien smuggling rings. These more recent experiences lead us now to evaluate Turkey as a medium-fraud country. Embassy Ankara is a designated IV and NIV processing post for Iranians and an IV post for Iraqis. ConGen Istanbul is a designated post for Iranian NIV cases. Fraud assessment in Turkey should separately view fraud among applicants from Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.

12. The Turkish economy continued to strengthen in 2005. As a result, Mission Turkey's posts are seeing more applicants from all regions of the country. Areas that continue to have high unemployment combined with historically high rates of illegal migration to the United States such as Konya and the Black Sea region are also sources of these fraudulent documents and smuggling rings. The GOT produces reliable, though technologically unsophisticated documents, which officers can readily check in questionable circumstances.

13. Reports from Iran on the other hand, indicate that the Iranian economy has shrunk 25% since the summer and youth unemployment continues to be a severe problem. Original documents and translations from Iran are of poor quality and low reliability. The new Iranian passport has good security features such as UV reaction, a biopage on the second page, and a digital photo-image in the background. However, applicants can change their name and DOB, making the passport an imperfect identity verifier. Iranian applicants also have special security considerations. Verifying whether applicants have had government or military service can be very difficult. Because the U.S. and Iran do not have diplomatic relations, officers are unable to conduct fraud investigations in Iran. Post heavily relies on interviews to check relationships and qualifications. Neither Ankara nor Istanbul has a native Farsi speaker among its LES members.

14. Embassy Ankara began processing more Iraqi applicants this fall when it became a designated IV processing post. Prior to that, Ankara had been processing Visas 92 cases for Iraqis in Turkey and some NIV cases. Officers are familiarizing themselves with Iraqi documents, but face problems similar to those when approaching Iranian documents. Post has not detected fraud with Iraqi documents yet but is proceeding with caution. Mission Turkey does not have a native Arabic or Kurdish speaking LES or FSO at this time.

1B. NIV FRAUD

15. Over 70 percent of the Mission NIV processing takes place at ConGen Istanbul. NIV fraud encountered typically consists of fraudulent documents, such as fake bank and employment letters and fake tax or company documents. A significant percentage of fraud cases post has identified involve students' falsifying or altering transcripts, mostly in the context of the summer work and travel program. The majority of such cases involve males between the ages of 18 and 45, though a fraud ring post detected this year also involved several women between the ages of 20 and 30, and their accompanying children. Many fraudulent B-1/B-2 applicants appear to be intending to work in the U.S. or join family members living and/or working illegally in the U.S.

16. Embassy Ankara continues to work with other embassies to keep abreast of new trends and developments. The embassies meet quarterly to exchange information and notable cases. Among the trends jointly discovered were the increase in the use of persons holding valid visas to shepherd male-fide applicants to their appointments.

17. Fraud among Iranian NIV applicants is so prevalent that officers do not rely on their documents. Officers must rely

on what is revealed during the interview. In early 2005, officers at Embassy Ankara uncovered a fraud ring that was using high-quality documents from reputable U.S. medical institutions and well-coached applicants (ref B). Ankara has initiated weekly emails between Iranian processing posts to track trends in NIV interviews and to compare notes.

¶8. Student and Exchange Visitor Visas: Mission Turkey has seen a number of voluntary departure cases in which aliens used F-1 student visas (typically for ESL) to go to the U.S. and work illegally. Most F-1 fraud cases are identified when the applicant submits fake or altered transcripts to hide failing grades.

¶9. Employment-Based Visas (H-1b, L-1, E-1, E-2): Istanbul has confirmed at least three cases of H-1b fraud, in which the beneficiary falsified employment/academic records, in order to work for marble companies or restaurants. Ankara has noticed several cases of possible fraud among Iranian H-1b applicants. Post usually sees a spike in suspect L-1 or E-1/E-2 applications once the H-1b cap has been reached each year.

¶C. IV FRAUD

¶10. Embassy Ankara sees IV fraud mostly in fianc and spousal petitions. This summer Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) cracked down on a Turkish marriage fraud ring in California. The Turkish organizer was deported for arranging over 50 fraudulent marriages. Officers frequently return petitions on the basis of polygamy because applicants fail to divorce their spouse in Turkey or Iran before remarrying in the U.S.

¶11. Although ConGen Istanbul does not process IV applications, it has a tangential role in some potentially fraudulent marriages when couples execute the "Affidavit of Eligibility to Marry." A significant portion of these notarials involve young women marrying Iranian men, whom they met on the internet and have seen for the first time during their short stay in Istanbul.

¶D. DV FRAUD

¶12. Turkish DV fraud most often occurs with forged diplomas and employment letters. Relationships of derivatives to the primary applicant are not usually fraudulent. Calls to schools and offices can easily reveal fraudulent documents. Fraud in DV is low and has not increased since last year.

¶E. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD

¶13. There have been few cases of ACS and passport fraud identified in Istanbul. Although the proximity to Iran and recently-added flight connections to Iraq increase the potential for fraud cases, Mission Turkey sees relatively few such applicants

¶14. ConGen Istanbul witnesses a low but steady number of false claims to citizenship, largely from third country nationals (usually Iranians). These cases are typically obvious, given gaps in the person's story or documents, and easily verified through contact with the DHS regional office in Athens, or through PIERS/INK searches. Ankara and Adana have not seen fraud related to ACS.

¶F. ADOPTION FRAUD

¶15. Embassy Ankara does not encounter much adoption fraud. The legal process is so rigorous that it is difficult to falsely adopt a child; however, applicants and agencies in Iran sometimes try to cut corners in order to hasten the process. The result has been adoptive mothers falsely registered as the biological mothers of their children. In one case, a petitioner had to return the child.

¶G. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD

¶16. Embassy Ankara has not been able to detect much fraud in Visas 92 cases; however, the unreliability of Iranian documents keeps the officers' attention focused on these cases. ConGen Istanbul does not process Visa 92 cases, but processes all the Visa 93 cases for Mission Turkey. These cases are thoroughly vetted by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) prior to action at post, and any suspicious cases that are passed to post from ICMC are flagged as such.
22ConGen Istanbul processed 74 transportation letters for lost/stolen I-551 cases in FY 2005. Although previous years

yielded several cases that proved to be fraudulent, none were identified in FY-2005, thanks to a more thorough interview and investigation process, coupled with verification through DHS in Athens.

IH. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

I17. Host government authorities have assisted in recent fraud investigations (particularly the fraud ring investigation) by verifying some civil documents and interviewing at least one applicant. However, their own workload constraints, as well as a combination of sympathy for applicants presenting fraudulent documents and perception that a major prosecution would not lead to a discernible payoff, kept them from investigating the 2005 fraud ring to a degree that would show tangible results and arrests.

II. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

I18. Fraudulent marriages on the IV side and falsely obtained H-1b petitions on the NIV side continue to be matters of concern. As there have been smuggling rings broken up over the last 12 months in both of these areas, officers review these cases with caution.

I19. In FY-2005, the U.S. Coast Guard alerted Mission Turkey that Turkish shipping companies accounted for a disproportionate number of deserters from foreign vessels the visiting U.S. ports. This, together with testimony from several applicants and voluntary departure cases, confirms what conoffs in Mission Turkey had observed for years -- that one common way young men (typically from the Black Sea coast) to enter the U.S. illegally is by stowing away on or deserting from ships doing business in U.S. waters.

I20. ConGen Istanbul continues to be a transit point for male-fide immigrants from the Far East and Central Asia. Gozen Aviation Security, a private security firm that screens all U.S.-bound flights in Istanbul, reports that interceptions of U.S.-bound male-fide passengers has dropped off in the last year or so.

IJ. STAFFING AND TRAINING

I21. ConGen Istanbul's FPU consists of an officer and an LES; for both of whom fraud prevention work is balanced along with their main duties of handling overall NIV and ACS work. Embassy Ankara has one officer and two LES, who also work part time in support of fraud prevention efforts. Other LES members at both posts' NIV units assist with investigations and validation studies. Post's discovery in FY-2005 of several fraud rings reinforces the need for officers to redouble their efforts, both in terms of devoting more time and resources to fraud prevention activities, as well as to organizing and seeking further training. The FPM in Ankara will attend PC-541 in January 2006. One of the Ankara's LES attended PC-542 in December 2004. In Ankara, the FPU would like to improve the database of applicants to better crosscheck facts. Also the FPM needs more contacts with local authorities to gain assistance.

I22. The current FPM in Istanbul attended PC-541 in October 2005, and also participated in the Balkan Fraud Roundtable hosted by Embassy Athens in November 2005. The Istanbul LES FPA attended PC-542 in December 2004. In anticipation of the current FPM's departure from Istanbul next year, post plans to have another Istanbul-based officer attend PC-541 in 2006. All incoming officers in the section receive a fraud briefing as part of their orientation process, and all five NIV adjudicating officers came to post immediately following ConGen training, including basic fraud detection techniques. The FPU will dedicate much of FY-2006 to improving the fraud library at post, organizing validation studies, and establishing more anti-fraud training modules for FSOs and LES alike.

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